

Friendship with God

Friendship with my spouse

In the Holy Spirit

MARRIAGE

®

IN CHRIST



Advent 2020

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Meditations by William C. Wacker, unless otherwise noted.

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Introduction

Advent and the Christmas season present one of the most important chapters in the story of God's good creation, his great love, and his rescue of humanity. Moreover, it is an ongoing story, and we have a place in it. It is our story!

However, the media in all its varied outlets including social media bombard us with an overwhelming amount of information. It is exceedingly difficult to sort what is true from what is not. The result is often fear, division, and unrest. On top of that the consumer society kicks into high gear at Christmas time. These confusing voices clamor for our attention and shape our view of reality. One of the reasons for praying with the Scriptures as a couple is to hear the truth clearly and to find our place in the true story of the world.

Special feasts and the seasons that prepare us to celebrate them are vital for our lives and our marriages. The Scriptures and our prayer together help to refocus us. We are living signs that point to God's great love for his people. A love that became incarnate in the birth of his son Jesus. The peace and unity we witness to in our marriages are vital elements in proclaiming the good news about the birth of Jesus.

We offer these daily Scriptures and mediations as a way to help busy couples to stay connected during the hectic Advent season.

Pattern

We list all the readings for each day. In previous Advent series we picked one reading and let the meditation focus on that text. This year will again pick one of the daily readings, but most of the meditations will have both the Old Testament reading and the Gospel in mind. We encourage you to have a Bible ready to look up the other reading for the day.

The weekday readings in the Catholic lectionary are divided into three sections.

- **November 30 – December 9:** Readings from Isaiah, the prophet of Advent. The meditations have the Gospel in mind and follow this pattern: The promise, the promise fulfilled in Jesus, our response.
- **December 10 – 16** Readings from the Gospel are about John the Baptist: The meditations focus on the question, *Who is John the Baptist?*
- **December 17 -24** The Gospel readings focus on the events leading up to the birth of Jesus.

Note: During Advent several feast days take precedence in the lectionary, for example the Feast of St. Andrew occurs on November 11 which is the first Monday of Advent, and the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is on December 12. To follow the Advent themes, we have chosen to follow the Advent readings for those days. However, we have kept the readings for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8 which falls on Tuesday of the second week of Advent this year.

The Day of The Lord: a key to understanding Advent

One of the great promises that God makes in and through the prophets is that the day will come when he will act in a definitive way to set the world to rights. He will heal creation, he will bring justice, he will raise up the lowly and bring down the haughty and proud. It will be “the day of the LORD”¹ or “the day of the messiah.” It is more than a single day, it is an age, it is the whole reign of God. The prophets often simply referred to it as “the age to come,” or “in those days”, or “on that day.”

Among the many great promises is that “on that day” a great king from the line of David will come. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will rule with justice and love. The New Testament announces that the King has come!

The Jews at the time of Jesus had been waiting for their long exile in Babylon to come to an end. It was true that they had returned to the land, but they were still subject to foreign powers, and they had not seen the glory of the Lord return to their temple. They were longing for the true King, the Messiah, to come. In him God would act. God would defeat their enemies, return to the Temple, and usher in the great and glorious day of the Lord. On that day the resurrection would occur and creation itself would be healed and transformed. There would be a new heaven and a new earth.

The New Testament proclaims that the day of salvation has dawned in the life, death, resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit. He has mounted his throne and ascended to his rightful place with his Father. That glorious, long awaited day has begun in the present, and will be fulfilled when Jesus returns in glory, defeats all the enemies and hands everything over to his Father so that “God will be all in all,” 1 Cor 15:24-28.

The word “advent” means an arrival or a coming. It is the season when the Church celebrates the “arrival” of the Messiah at His birth. It looks with longing to his coming at the end of the present age when “the day of the LORD” will be fully realized.

That the King is coming is very good news for us as well. The King is here. And he is coming again in all of his glory and splendor—to set the world right, to defeat death, to restore creation.

¹ LORD in all capital letters is the traditional way of indicating that the Hebrew word is God’s name Yahweh. When we quote the text we will leave the all caps. In the mediations we will use Lord.



First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2020

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**



Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Mark 13:33-37

Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. ³⁶ May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Meditation

Jesus said, watch, stay awake. Why? Because you do not know when the time will come. The time for what? The answer is found in the long, complex and often painful story of Israel. When Israel went into exile in 587 B.C. the glory of the Lord left the Temple. This was tragic because the Temple was the unique dwelling place of God on Earth. God had abandoned it because, as Isaiah said, God's people had wandered away from him. The prophet expresses the great longing of God's people from that point on, "Return for the sake of your servants" Isaiah 63:17. Now, over 500 years later that prayer is being answered. God is returning to Israel in the person of Jesus. He is the unique dwelling place of God on earth. He is the new Temple. It has been a long time but be watchful! Be alert! You might miss it!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.² In days to come, the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it;³ many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb the LORD'S mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, That he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Meditation

The promise: The day will come when nations will stream to the Lord's house. They will turn their weapons of war into tools to care for God's good creation. They will abandon war colleges and cease to fight with each other. That will be a great day!

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: The stream of nations coming to the Lord begins as a trickle. A Roman centurion, both a Gentile and an integral part of the most powerful fighting force in the world came humbly to Jesus. He demonstrated the kind of faith that Isaiah had anticipated. It was the kind of faith that Jesus has not seen in anyone in Israel.

Our response: We have come from all over the world. We are called to believe with the Centurion that while we are unworthy, Jesus still desires to share one life with us. That belief should be reflected in the way in which we live. Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord and work for peace.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

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Reading Isaiah 11:1-10

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.² The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, A spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD,³ and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide,⁴ But he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.⁵ Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.⁶ ¹ Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.⁷ The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox.⁸ The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair.⁹ There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea.¹⁰ On that day, The root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Meditation

The promise: On that day the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon the son of David. When he rules all creation will be healed. The chaos that was reintroduced into God's good, ordered creation with the first sin will be undone. Traditional enemies will live together in peace. He will establish God's kingdom in the most wonderful and unexpected ways.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: That day has arrived in Jesus the son of David who was filled with the Holy Spirit. He rejoiced that all things had been handed over to him. In him, God has made himself known.

Our response: We are truly blessed because we too have seen what prophets and kings longed to see. The Son has revealed himself to us. We will participate in the great day of the Lord.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

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Reading: Isaiah 25:6-10

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples A feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; ⁸ he will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces; The reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the LORD has spoken. ⁹ On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" ¹⁰ For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

Meditation

The promise: On that day there will be a great banquet. It will be the most wonderful feast one can imagine. On that day death will be destroyed and all tears will be wiped away. On that day God will save us.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: In Jesus that day has arrived. He cures the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute and many others and in his resurrection, he will defeat death. That day has arrived, and Jesus hosts a great feast. He turns seven loaves of bread and a few fish into a feast for the great multitude. And there are leftovers!

Our response: In the breaking of the bread we will continue to know the Lord and be fed. He is the broken bread and poured out wine. For he is the Lord for whom we have looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week, Thursday, December 3, 2020

Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Isaiah 26:1-6

On that day they will sing this song in the land of Judah: "A strong city have we; he sets up walls and ramparts to protect us.² Open up the gates to let in a nation that is just, one that keeps faith.³ A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace; in peace, for its trust in you."⁴ Trust in the LORD forever! For the LORD is an eternal Rock.⁵ He humbles those in high places, and the lofty city he brings down; He tumbles it to the ground, levels it with the dust.⁶ It is trampled underfoot by the needy, by the footsteps of the poor.

Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Meditation

The promise: On that day a great song will fill the land. The song will be about God's protection for those who trust him. Trust in the Lord forever! For the Lord is an eternal Rock. He will protect the nation that trusts in him but will humble those who are proud.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus told a parable about two builders. One is wise, the other foolish. The wise builder builds on rock, the foolish on sand. The house built on rock will survive the inevitable storms of life, the other will collapse. Jesus is the Rock!

Our response: We are to listen to the promise and be wise. We are to hear his words and act on them. That is to trust Jesus. He is the eternal rock.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



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Reading: Isaiah 29:17-24

But a very little while, and Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard, and the orchard be regarded as a forest! ¹⁸ On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. ¹⁹ The lowly will ever find joy in the LORD, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. ²⁰ For the tyrant will be no more and the arrogant will have gone; All who are alert to do evil will be cut off, ²¹ those whose mere word condemns a man, Who ensnare his defender at the gate, and leave the just man with an empty claim. ²² ¹ Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of the house of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham: Now Jacob shall have nothing to be ashamed of, nor shall his face grow pale. ²³ When his children see the work of my hands in his midst, they shall keep my name holy; they shall reverence the Holy One of Jacob, and be in awe of the God of Israel. ²⁴ Those who err in spirit shall acquire understanding, and those who find fault shall receive instruction.

Meditation

The promise: On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: That day has arrived. Two blind men asked Jesus to heal them. He asked a simple question, “do you believe that I can do this?” They said yes. Jesus opened the eyes of the two blind men.

Our response: Jesus asks us the question, “Do you believe that I can do this?” Do we?

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



First Week, Saturday, December 5, 2020

Isaiah 30:19–21, 23–26; Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Isaiah 30: 30:19–21, 23–26

O people of Zion, who dwell in Jerusalem, no more will you weep; He will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as he hears he will answer you.²⁰ The Lord will give you the bread you need and the water for which you thirst. No longer will your Teacher hide himself, but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher,²¹ While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: "This is the way; walk in it," when you would turn to the right or to the left.²³ He will give rain for the seed that you sow in the ground, And the wheat that the soil produces will be rich and abundant. On that day your cattle will graze in spacious meadows;²⁴ The oxen and the asses that till the ground will eat silage tossed to them with shovel and pitchfork.²⁵ Upon every high mountain and lofty hill there will be streams of running water. On the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall,²⁶ The light of the moon will be like that of the sun and the light of the sun will be seven times greater (like the light of seven days). On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people, he will heal the bruises left by his blows.

Meditation

Promise: "No more will you weep; He will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as he hears he will answer you.²⁰ The Lord will give you the bread you need and the water for which you thirst. **No longer will your Teacher hide himself**, but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher." You will see creation itself restored. On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people."

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus was teaching in public. He was moved to compassion, he sent his disciples out to begin the restoration of creation by healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers and driving out demons.

Our response: We are called to be agents of transformation; called to be the Lord's hands and feet; called to bind up the wounds of his people.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Sunday, December 6, 2020

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God). ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. ³ A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'" ⁴ John (the) Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. ⁶ John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the voice "crying out in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." He is the herald, the bringer of glad tidings. He is the one who announces that the Lord in all his glory is at long last returning to Zion. He is the one who is announcing that God himself is coming – "here is your God!" God's mighty arm, his power, his compassion, his great love is made visible in the person of Jesus. John is the voice who says that when Jesus comes, he will pour out the Holy Spirit on us. Now is the time to prepare, to repent, to make ready for the birth of Jesus.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



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– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10 (excerpt)

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom.² They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song. The glory of Lebanon will be given to them, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; They will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.³ Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak,⁴ Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; With divine recompense he comes to save you.⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared;⁶ Then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing...⁸ A highway will be there, called the holy way; No one unclean may pass over it, nor fools go astray on it.⁹ . . . It is for those with a journey to make, and on it the redeemed will walk.¹⁰ Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; They will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee.

Meditation

The promise: "God himself will come and save you." Here is your God, he comes with vindication; With divine recompense he comes to save you. When our God comes, the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared, the lame will leap like a stag, and the tongue of the dumb will sing. Creation itself will be transformed. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the plain.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: Jesus does what only God can do, he forgives sins. To prove that it is God who is at work, Jesus does what God does in the reading from Isaiah, he causes the lame to walk.

Our response: We have seen incredible things. God is at work in Jesus and we are about to celebrate his birthday! It is for those with a journey to make, and on it the redeemed will walk. "Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy; They will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee."

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week, Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Immaculate Conception, Genesis 3:9-15,20; Ephesians 1:3-3,11-12; Luke 1:26-38



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, ³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" ¹ ³⁵ And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived ¹ a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; ³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God." ³⁸ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Meditation

Only a woman can be the Mother of God. She is not just the mother of his human nature, rather she is the mother of the whole person who is the second person of the Trinity. It is pure gift and can only happen because the Holy Spirit came upon her. But, at the same time, it could not happen without Mary's free and full yes. Mary participates in the mystery of the Incarnation in a way that is hers alone. She is the Mother of God and, at the foot of the cross, Jesus gives her to the Disciple and to us.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week, Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Reading Isaiah 40:25-31

To whom can you liken me as an equal? says the Holy One.²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these: He leads out their army and numbers them, calling them all by name. By his great might and the strength of his power not one of them is missing!²⁷ ¹ Why, O Jacob, do you say, and declare, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸ Do you not know or have you not heard? The LORD is the eternal God, creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint nor grow weary, and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny. ²⁹ He gives strength to the fainting; for the weak he makes vigor abound. ³⁰ Though young men faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall,³¹ They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings; They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint.

Meditation

The Promise: Look at the vastness of creation. The Lord God their creator is at the head of an army of vast proportions and he knows each of them by name! He does not grow weary. He is there to give us strength when we are faint, to give us vigor when we are weary. There is no one like him.

Promise fulfilled in Jesus: In Jesus, the creator of the universe says, "Come to me, come to me all you who labor." Jesus' burden is light, his yoke is easy to bear and full of kindness.

Our response: Hope in the Lord. Hope in Jesus. He will renew our strength. We will soar as with eagles' wings; we will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint. That hope is not deceptive because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week, Thursday, December 10, 2020

Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 11:11-15

Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force.¹³ All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John.¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come.¹⁵ Whoever has ears ought to hear.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the one who is to come before the Servant of the Lord. His job is to sound a warning that when the Servant comes, the Servant will winnow Israel and he will judge the wicked. But he will console with tender mercy the needy and the weak. John's mission will be like that of the Servant. He will call the nation to repentance. His mission is to warn the people that the king is coming. Prior to Jesus, none greater than John the Baptist has been born. Whoever has ears ought to hear. Can you hear?

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week, Friday, December 11, 2020

Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 11:16-19

"To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another,¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.'¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.'¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? Some said he was possessed by a demon. He came preaching repentance and demonstrated the seriousness of his message by the way in which he lived. He believed what Isaiah had said, "If you would hearken to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river, and your vindication like the waves of the sea; Your descendants would be like the sand, and those born of your stock like its grains, Their name never cut off or blotted out from my presence." But they would not listen. The bridegroom came and the wedding banquet began. But they would not listen. John says the king is coming, will we listen to him and the prophets who came before him?

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation.

Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Second Week, Saturday, December 12, 2020

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 17:9a, 10-13

As they were coming down from the mountain, . . . the disciples asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; ¹² but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? The author of the first reading Ben Sirach did not know that he was pointing to John when he said, "You, Elijah, are destined, it is written, in time to come to put an end to wrath before the day of the LORD, to turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons, and to reestablish the tribes of Jacob. Blessed is he who shall have seen you before he dies." But Jesus knew who John was. Unfortunately, the people had seen Elijah and did not recognize him. Worse than that they had killed John and now the Son of Man will suffer the same fate at their hands. Blessed are we who recognize who John is, because in that we will see the one to whom he is pointing.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Sunday, December 13, 2020

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 1:6-8, 19-29

A man named John was sent from God. ⁷ He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. ¹⁹ And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites (to him) to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹ So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." ²² So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" ²³ He said: "I am 'the voice of one crying out in the desert, "Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as Isaiah the prophet said." ²⁴ Some Pharisees were also sent. ²⁵ They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, ²⁷ the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸ This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? John understood himself and his mission as that of a great signpost. He pointed the way to the Light, to the Messiah, to the prophet like Moses. He did not even see himself as Elijah, although Jesus would give him that title. Rather, John saw himself as "the voice of one crying out in the desert, "Make straight the way of the Lord." In another place he will claim to be the best man, if you will, of the bridegroom (John 3:29). Our marriages are also signposts pointing to the great mystery of the incarnation. Two people becoming one. Not unlike two natures in one person! God and man united in the person of Jesus.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week, Monday, December 14, 2020

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 21:23-27

When he had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" ²⁴ Jesus said to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question, and if you answer it for me, then I shall tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?" They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'" ²⁶ But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet." ²⁷ So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? The first reading offers an answer to the question Jesus' audience couldn't admit. He was like Balaam, one who hears what God says, and knows what the Most High knows. John's authority came from God himself. He was a prophet in the long line of prophets that God had sent to his people. And like the other prophets, the people would not listen, because it would mean they had to change. We are now compelled to answer the question. The birth of our Lord is coming soon. Are we ready? Will we listen?

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week, Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 21:28-32

"What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. ³¹ ¹ Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. ³² When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the voice of the Lord calling for repentance. But the leaders of the people did not believe him. As the prophet Zephaniah said, "Woe to the city, rebellious and polluted, to the tyrannical city! She hears no voice, accepts no correction; In the LORD she has not trusted, to her God she has not drawn near." The prophet then warns that judgement is coming and only a humble remnant will remain. When John preached only the dregs of society repented. All the others were like the son who said yes but did not do what his father asked him to do. Which son are you?

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week, Wednesday, December 16, 2020

Isaiah 45:6-8,21-25; Luke 7:18b-23



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 7:18b-23

John summoned two of his disciples ¹⁹ and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" ²⁰ When the men came to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?'" ²¹ At that time he cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind. ²² And he said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. ²³ And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

Meditation

Who is John the Baptist? He is the one who asked the question that is on everyone's heart and mind, "Are you the one?" Jesus answered by evoking the words of Isaiah. He echoes Isaiah 35 and our first reading for today. Tell John that you see me doing what God himself promised to do when he rescued his people and all the people of the world. Jesus is making a remarkable claim. In him, the God of Israel, their LORD, is at work. St. Paul will echo our first reading in his great hymn to Jesus in Philippians 2:10. So many centuries before Isaiah prophesied, "To me every knee shall bend; by me every tongue shall swear, Saying, "Only in the LORD are just deeds and power."

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week, Thursday, December 17, 2020

Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 1:1-17 (excerpts)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.² Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.³ Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, **whose mother was Tamar...**⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, **whose mother was Rahab.** Boaz became the father of Obed, **whose mother was Ruth.** Obed became the father of Jesse,⁶ Jesse the father of David the king. David became the father of Solomon, **whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.**⁷ Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, . . .¹¹ Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile.¹² After the Babylonian exile, . . .¹⁵ Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,¹⁶ Jacob the father of Joseph, **the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.**

Meditation

I found my great-grandfather's name on the 1880 census list. His name was right there along with his brothers, sisters, and parents. The next census listed his wife and the next one had my grandfather. Just names, dates and the city they lived in. But now I had a piece of the puzzle that is me. Matthew does for Jesus what Ancestry.com did for me, only much bigger. Jesus is the goal toward which the whole of Israel's history has been inexorably heading. He is the one in whom the promises made to Abraham and David are fulfilled. He is the solution for the all too human story of sin and failing (prostitutes, adultery, murder, national exile). He is the one who ultimately makes sense out of my story, my genealogy and the puzzle who is me and my spouse.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week, Friday, December 18, 2020

Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-24



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,² but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit.¹⁹ Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.²⁰ Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.²¹ She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."²⁴ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.²⁵ He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Meditation

We know that God is just in all that he does. We know too that Jesus is God. So, it would follow that Jesus is also just. He would be a righteous King who would govern wisely and do what is right in the land, as Jeremiah said. But in the same way that the child Jesus had to learn from his parents how to walk and talk like any human child, he must have learned something about justice from his parents as well. In this case, he learned a lesson from Joseph. Joseph was a righteous man, a just man. It was fortunate that Mary and the divine child in her womb were at the mercy of a man whose sense of justice came not from the law, but from the prophets. The law would have killed Mary and the unborn baby. But Joseph believed, with Isaiah, that a bruised reed should not be broken or a dimly burning wick quenched (Isaiah 42:3-4). Jesus learned that lesson well. Matthew described Jesus with the very same language. "A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope." (Matthew 12:17).

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Third Week, Saturday, December 19, 2020

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 1:5-25 (excerpt)

⁸Once when he was serving as priest in his division's turn before God. . . ¹¹ the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. ¹² Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of (the) Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. ¹⁶ He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, ¹⁶ and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord."

Meditation

Zechariah knew the story of Israel well enough to know that if his child had the spirit and power of Elijah, he would announce that at long last the Lord, the God of Israel was acting. His son would herald the long-awaited Messiah. He also knew that his son would be in danger – that was the lot of prophets. We know that the King did come. We also know that he will come again at the end of the present evil age. And he will come in glory – surrounded by more than one angel. It is good news and a sobering challenge for us to be like John and “to prepare a people fit for the Lord.”

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**



Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, ³³ and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" ¹ ³⁵ And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived ¹ a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; ³⁷ for nothing will be impossible for God." ³⁸ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Meditation

What is the archangel Gabriel doing in her house? These are such strange words of greeting. What does he mean by "favored one?" Would you consider it a favor to be asked to bear a child out of wedlock? And what about poor Joseph, what will he think? How can this be? It will be as it was in the beginning. The Holy Spirit who hovered over the chaotic water and transformed it into the good creation will come upon her. New creation will spring from the willing woman's womb. What would you say? What was her response? "Oh, Gabriel, tell Him that the handmaid of the Lord says, yes!"

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Fourth Week, Monday, December 21, 2020

Song of Solomon 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 1:39-45

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah,⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit,⁴² cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.⁴³ And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Meditation

Two women, unexpectedly with child

The barren one in her sixth month

The unmarried one starting to show

What kind of reception will she find?

Shame or honor, support or rejection?

Families can be so unpredictable.

But where else to turn except to family?

She hastened to a little town, nestled in the

Hills of Judea, six miles from Jerusalem.

No shame awaited her

"Blessed are you among women"

"Blessed is the child in your womb"

Rather the place of supreme honor

For the Mother of our Lord,

The Mother of God.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Fourth Week, Tuesday, December 22, 2020

1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; ⁴⁷ my spirit rejoices in God my savior. ⁴⁸ For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. ⁴⁹ The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. ⁵¹ He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. ⁵² He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. ⁵³ The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." ⁵⁶ Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Meditation

Irony: 1) humor based on using words to suggest the opposite of their literal meaning; 2) something said or written that uses humor based on words suggesting the opposite of their literal meaning; 3) incongruity between what actually happens and what might be expected to happen, especially when this disparity seems absurd or laughable.

Cosmic Irony: God has displayed his majesty and power

- He has shown strength with his arm.
- He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
- He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.
- He has filled the hungry with good things, and
- He sent the rich away empty.

How? By becoming a helpless human infant, born to a poor, peasant family in a small insignificant village six miles from the capital – a village that is so far out of the power loop that it might as well be 100 miles away.

Advent is the time to laugh with great joy at the delicious irony of our God and his plan. The King is almost here!!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 1:57-66

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.⁶⁰ But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John."⁶¹ They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name."⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him.⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed.⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.⁶⁵ Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea.⁶⁶ All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Meditation

You remember how afraid Zachariah was when the angel appeared to him? Well imagine a whole village being frightened. Imagine the whole village, maybe a couple of hundred people, talking and whispering. Some were rejoicing with her; others were turning their heads away when Elizabeth walked by with her baby. What were they saying? An old barren woman has given birth to a baby boy; a mute husband speaks after writing "John" on a tablet – not a family name at all. Rumors about angels in the temple, her cousin is pregnant but by whom? What does all this mean? If God is really at work, how will Herod respond? How will Caesar respond? What do we do with all of this? What a curious mix of fear and hope. We are so close now. Advent is coming to an end soon. Hope and fear of the Lord is a good mix. Hope and fear of Herod or Caesar is not hope at all.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79



Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Reading: Luke 1:67-79

Then Zechariah his father, filled with the holy Spirit, prophesied, saying: ⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant, ⁷⁰ even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, ⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant ⁷³ and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, ⁷⁴ rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us ⁷⁹ to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Meditation

The Holy Spirit moves Zechariah to announce that God is about to act in a strange and unexpected way. First two babies will be born. Then they grow up into strong young men. Cousins; one announces, the other fulfills the promises made nearly two thousand years earlier. It is a story that continues to echo through the ages to this very day. God acted, God is acting, God will act. He does not forget. He is never late. His arm is not too short to save. He is filled with compassion. The good news of Christmas is that God himself has come to rescue his people. Tomorrow we celebrate the fact that the love of God is so real that it is a person. It is Jesus who is the Christ.

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.



Christmas Day, December 25, 2020

Isaiah 52:7-1; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18

Pray

God, come to our assistance.

– **Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

– **As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading: John 1:1-18 (excerpt)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.³ ¹ All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be⁴ through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race;⁵ the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.¹⁵ John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'"¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace,¹⁷ because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

Meditation

John's opening line, "in the beginning" deliberately echoes the majestic opening lines of the book of Genesis. Creation was always intended to be the place where human beings and God would dwell together. Tragically, we invited sin, darkness and death into that good and beautiful creation. But darkness and death could never overcome the light that is God. Their victory is temporary. Rather than abandoning us to our folly, God became man and dwelt with us in the person of his Son, Jesus. In Jesus, we see the glory of God. In Jesus, we see and experience God's great love. In Jesus, God gives light and life to those who simply believe in him. What an incredible gift to unwrap this morning. Merry Christmas!

Quiet reflection: Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.

Prayers and Intentions: As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.

Lord's Prayer: Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Unity Prayer: God, make our hearts one. Amen.